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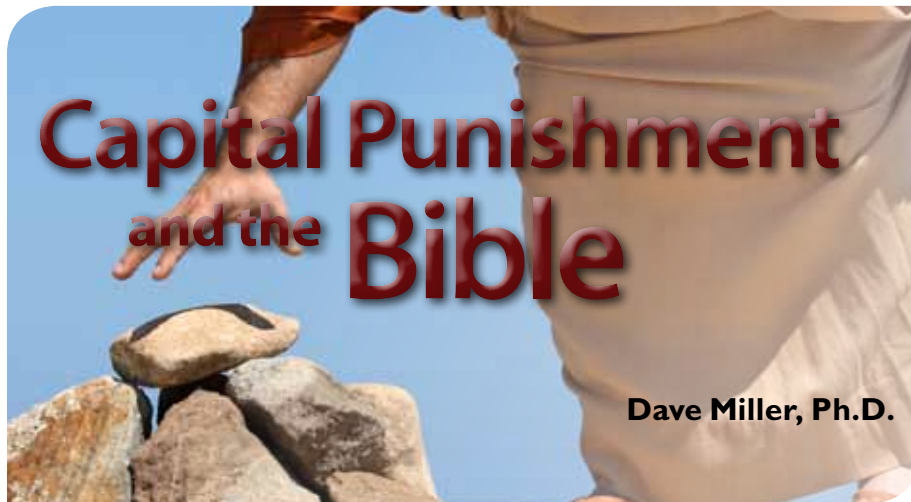
JULY 2012 • VOL. 32 • NO. 7

**Global Warming
...and Gaseous
Dinosaurs**

***Explorer Series #5
Creation vs. Evolution***

Capital Punishment and the Bible





On the morning of March 2, 1998, Patrick Kennedy called 911 to report the rape of his eight-year-old stepdaughter. The reader will pardon the unspeakable, nightmarish details of the brutal assault described in the following quotation from the legal documents:

When police arrived at [Kennedy's] home between 9:20 and 9:30 a.m., they found [the girl] on her bed, wearing a T-shirt and wrapped in a bloody blanket. She was bleeding profusely from the vaginal area.... [She] was transported to the Children's Hospital. An expert in pediatric forensic medicine testified that [the girl's] injuries were the most severe he had seen from a sexual assault in his four years of practice. A laceration to the left wall of the vagina had separated her cervix from the back of her vagina, causing her rectum to protrude into the vaginal structure. Her entire perineum was torn from the posterior fourchette to the anus. The injuries required emergency surgery (*Kennedy v. Louisiana*, 2008, bracketed items added).

So detestable was this crime that the U.S. Supreme Court conceded: "Petitioner's crime was one that cannot be recounted in these pages in a way sufficient to capture in full the hurt and horror inflicted on his victim or to convey the revulsion society, and the jury that represents it, sought to express by sentencing petitioner to death" (*Kennedy v.*).

After further investigation, Kennedy was charged with the aggravated rape of his stepdaughter. Louisiana law allowed the district attorney to seek the death

penalty for defendants found guilty of raping children under the age of 12. The jury unanimously determined that Kennedy should be sentenced to death. Kennedy appealed the sentence—all the way to the highest court in the state. But the Louisiana Supreme Court reaffirmed the imposition of the death sentence (Liptak, 2007). Kennedy again appealed—all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In a 5-to-4 decision (split down ideological lines—liberal vs. conservative), **the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the Louisiana Court's decision, commuting Kennedy's death sentence.** The Court held that it is unconstitutional for states to impose the death penalty for the rape of a child where the assault did not result in the child's death. The death penalty in such a case would be deemed an exercise of "cruel and unusual punishment." Consider some of the remarks offered by the Court to justify this unconscionable, reprehensible, morally degraded decision:

Evolving standards of decency must embrace and express respect for the dignity of the person, and the punishment of criminals must conform to that rule.

When the law punishes by death, it risks its own sudden descent into brutality, transgressing the constitutional commitment to decency and restraint.

[T]he death penalty can be disproportionate to the crime itself where the crime did not result, or was not intended to result, in death of the victim.

Rape is without doubt deserving of serious punishment; but in terms of moral depravity and of the injury to the person and to the public, it does not compare with murder, which does involve the unjustified taking of human life (*Kennedy v.*).

In complete harmony with the leftist trend that commenced in the 1960s, in which focus shifted from the rights of the victim to the rights of the perpetrator, observe that the liberal element on the Court showed uncanny concern for the "dignity" of the criminal, while manifesting a corresponding disregard for the dignity of the victim. They also made the ridiculous comparison of lawful, prudent application of the death penalty to the unlawful, senseless crimes of the wicked—even implying that use of the death penalty conflicts with "decency and restraint." This would mean that God was indecent and unrestrained when He personally invoked the death penalty on millions throughout Old Testament history (e.g., the Flood), and also when He commands civil authority to do the same (e.g., Romans 13:1ff). **The five justices clearly do not know God** (cf. Romans 1:28; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Titus 1:16).

This contention (that death is justifiable only in cases where murder has been committed) implies that if Kennedy would have killed his stepdaughter after raping her, the liberals on the Court may have been more willing to invoke the death penalty (although they indicated that even then, the criminal would have had to commit "a particularly depraved murder"). But their unwarranted assumption pitches judicial evaluation into the realm of subjective human opinion that changes with the fickle whims of culture. In fact, the opinion of the Court based much of its rationale on whether there exists national consensus on the propriety of capital punishment in cases of child rape—as if objective moral value is determined by majority human opinion. The justices' exclusion of the principles of Christian morality that once guided American courts prevents them from acknowledging **the only ultimate standard of authority** for deciding when the death penalty

is warranted. No human has it within himself to legislate on such a matter. **Only God** can define the conditions under which humans may take the life of other humans.

What's more, to maintain that invoking the death penalty is a "disproportionate" act when the criminal does not actually kill his victim, commits one to the absurd position that the criminal can subject his victim to excruciating, sadistic torture, anguish, and suffering—as long as he keeps his victim alive. And he could persist in his assaults **for years**, with a child of **any age**, and still not receive the death penalty! The justices clearly have no grasp of, let alone sympathy for, the untold, unimaginable damage perpetrated, not only on the tender body of Kennedy's stepchild, but on the child's spirit. The emotional, psychological, mental, and spiritual havoc inflicted is indescribable and unfathomable—literally beyond comprehension. A part of that child was murdered, changing her forever. Most children subjected to such horrendous treatment are permanently scarred, and many are doomed for the rest of their lives to wander aimlessly with a tortured soul, a twisted outlook, and an unrecoverable existence. In fact, in one sense, death would be mercifully preferable to living with the aftermath. Ironically, the Court acknowledged this fact: "The attack was not just on her but **on her childhood....** Rape has a **permanent** psychological, emotional, and sometimes physical impact on the child.... We cannot dismiss the years of long anguish that must be endured by the victim of child rape" (*Kennedy v....*, emp. added). Yet, that is precisely what the court proceeded to do—dismiss the anguish. According to the majority of the Court, extending capital punishment to the rapist of a child would be "excessive," "cruel and unusual punishment" since America's "evolving standards of decency" "mark the progress of a maturing society." Indeed, the Court insisted that executing all child rapists "could not be reconciled with our evolving standards of decency and the necessity to constrain the use of the death penalty" (*Kennedy v....*). Unbelievable.

If **anything** verifies that we as a society are **not** maturing, but that we are, in fact, **devolving** from superior standards of decency and morality, it surely is our uncivilized, barbaric, unconscionable treatment of children in the last 40 years—from the butchery of abortion to the savagery of sexual abuse.

THE SOLUTION—OUR ONLY HOPE

The only legitimate way to evaluate and regulate human behavior is to look to the Creator. He is the One Who, in the words of the Founders of the American Republic, "created" all men, "endowed" them with life, provides them with "the laws of nature and of nature's God," and who functions as "the Supreme Judge of the world" (*Declaration of...*, 1776). If human opinion becomes the standard for judging ethical behavior, nothing but confusion, contradiction, and inconsistency can result.

The God of the Universe gave the Law of Moses, which He authored, to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai over three millennia ago. While that law code was specifically addressed to the Hebrews and has since been terminated by God Himself (cf. Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13; 10:9), nevertheless, that law provides permanent perspective on the proper attitude toward, and punishment for, criminal behavior. Since God is perfect and infinite in all of His attributes, His



directives to Israel concerning proper punishment of unethical and immoral human behavior ought to serve as the ultimate model for any nation's legal system.

The Founders certainly accepted this conclusion—and organized the Republic accordingly. For example, *Declaration* signer John Witherspoon stated that the "Ten Commandments...are the

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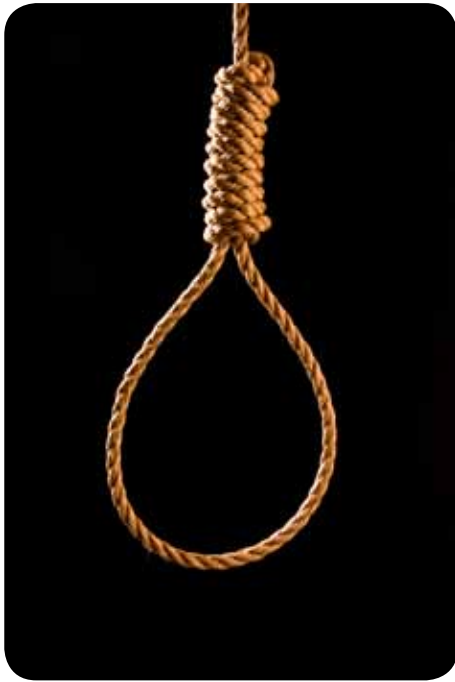
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Hanging was once a common form of execution in America.

sum of the **moral law**" (1815, 4:95, emp. added). Sixth President John Quincy Adams wrote:

The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious code; it contained many statutes...of **universal application—laws essential to the existence of men in society**, and most of which have been enacted by every nation, which ever professed any code of laws. But the Levitical was **given by God himself**; it extended to a great variety of objects of **infinite importance to the welfare of men....** Vain, indeed, would be the search among the writings of profane antiquity... to find so broad, so complete and **so solid a basis for morality as this decalogue** lays down (1848, pp. 61,70-71, emp. added).

Revolutionary War soldier and U.S. Congressman William Findley stated:

As a clear and exact knowledge of the **moral law** of nature is peculiarly important, in order to understand the whole system of revealed religion, I will state, that it pleased God to deliver, on Mount Sinai, a compendium of this holy law, and to write it with His own hand, on durable tables of stone. This law, which is commonly called the *ten commandments*, or *decalogue*, has **its foundation in the nature of God** and of man, in

the relation men bear to him, and to each other, and in the duties which result from those relations; and on this account it is **immutable and universally obligatory.... This was incorporated in the judicial law** (1812, pp. 22-23, emp. added, italics in orig.).

Governor of New York and U.S. Senator DeWitt Clinton insisted: "The sanctions of the Divine law...cover the whole area of human action.... The laws which regulate our conduct are the laws of man and the laws of God" (as quoted in Campbell, 1849, pp. 307,305). Premiere Founder John Adams explained: "If 'Thou shalt not covet,' and 'Thou shalt not steal,' were not commandments of Heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society, before it can be civilized or made free" (1797, 3:217).

Other Founders could be cited who understood that many of the laws that God gave to the Hebrews are absolutely necessary to civil society. Recognizing and respecting how God expected the Jews to deal with criminal behavior is critical to sustaining American society. Indeed, the Bible is the written Word of God. Within its pages, we find the wisdom of God. We find what is best for the human race—both spiritually as well as from a civil standpoint. So what is God's view of capital punishment? Both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament address this subject extensively.

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING

Very early in human history, God decreed that murderers were to forfeit their own lives: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). This standard continued into the Mosaic period (cf. Numbers 35:33). As a matter of fact, the law God gave to Moses to regulate Israelite civil society made provision for no fewer than 16 capital crimes. In 16 instances, the death penalty was to be invoked. The first four may be categorized as pertaining to civil matters.

1. Premeditated murder (Exodus 21:12-14,22-23; Leviticus 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21). This regulation even included the scenario in which

two men might be brawling and, in the process, cause the death of an innocent bystander or her unborn infant (which, incidentally, implies that premeditated killing of unborn children via abortion should be punished by death). It did not include accidental homicide, which we call "manslaughter."

2. Kidnapping (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). Books and movies have been produced in recent years that describe the devastation created by this crime. One miniseries depicted the kidnapping of a seven-year-old boy as he was walking home from school. The man who stole him sexually assaulted him hundreds of times over the next seven years, subjecting the child to untold emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse, before the boy, at age 14, escaped and was finally returned to his parents ("I Know My First Name....," 1989; Echols, 1991; cf. McMann, 2012; Atkins, 1999). But he was a completely different person, and never again would be the same. God would not tolerate such a thing in the Old Testament, and much of the same thing could be stopped in America if such crimes were taken as seriously as God Himself takes them.

3. Striking or cursing parents (Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 20:9). Jesus alluded to this point in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10.

4. Incurable rebelliousness (Deuteronomy 17:12). For example, a stubborn, disobedient, rebellious son who would not submit to parents or civil authorities was to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

The next six capital crimes can be identified as more specifically pertaining to religious matters.

5. Sacrificing to false gods (Exodus 22:20).

6. Violating the Sabbath (Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36).

7. Blasphemy, or cursing God (Leviticus 24:10-16,23).

8. False prophecy (Deuteronomy 13:1-11). The one who tried to entice the people to idolatry was to be executed, as were the people who were so influenced (Deuteronomy 13:12-18).

9. Human sacrifice (Leviticus 20:2). The Israelites were tempted to offer their children to false pagan deities, like Molech. But such was despicable to God (Jeremiah 19:5; 32:35).

(cont. on p. 68)

Global Warming...and Gaseous Dinosaurs

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

According to evolutionary theory's assumption-based dating methods and circular reasoning (see DeYoung, 2005), for well over 100 million years large sauropod dinosaurs roamed the Earth. *Antetonitrus* allegedly lived more than 200 million years ago, *Apatosaurus* 150 million years ago, and *Argentinosaurus* 95 million years ago—about 30 million years before dinosaurs are said to have gone extinct. Note that these dinosaurs supposedly did not flourish on Earth for just hundreds or thousands of years, but for multiplied millions of years. Evolutionists contend that dinosaurs inhabited Earth at least 500 times longer than “modern humans.”

Consider the connection between the vast time that sauropod dinosaurs allegedly were on Earth with a recent study published in *Current Biology* concerning “climate warmth” (i.e., global warming). According to Dr. David Wilkinson of John Moores University in Liverpool, and his colleagues, sauropods produced massive amounts of the “greenhouse” gas methane, which would have warmed the planet considerably. [NOTE: Scientists have suggested that greenhouse gas is “21 times more powerful than CO₂ at trapping heat on Earth and causing climate change” (“Dinosaurs ‘Gassed’...,” 2012).] Wilkinson and colleagues conservatively estimate that the “global methane production from sauropods” was “**520 million tonnes per year**” (2012, 22[9]:292-93, emp. added). Just how much is 520 million tons, comparatively speaking? According to Wilkinson, “Our calculations suggest these dinosaurs may have produced more methane **than all the modern sources, natural and human, put together**” (“Dinosaurs ‘Gassed’...,” emp. added).

Even though sauropods supposedly would have warmed the planet considerably with their massive amounts of emitted methane (“more... than all the modern sources, natural and human, put together”), the theory of evolution says they flourished on Earth for more than 100 million years. Yet, for the last several years evolutionary environmentalists have led man to believe that the world as we know it is in eminent danger because of a **few years** of (alleged) man-made global warming. Why should we believe that dinosaurs, who alone produced as much or more methane as is produced today (“both natural and anthropogenic”—Wilkinson, et al., p. 293), could survive for more than 100 million years in such warmth, but humans and all other forms of life on Earth today are supposedly making life unbearable in only a few measly years?

The contradictions, inconsistencies, and absurd allegations and suggestions (e.g., Al Gore’s “carbon credit” market; see Jean, 2008) of the godless mindset of evolutionary environmentalists is exasperating. The fact is, our planet has gone through stages of warming and cooling throughout its history (see Lyons, 2008; cf. Miller, 2008). Based upon fossil evidence, we know that dinosaurs and many other animals once lived in Antarctica when that continent had a much warmer climate. Humans and dinosaurs once flourished on Earth **together** (see Lyons and Butt, 2008), even though sauropods apparently emitted massive amounts of global-warming gases.

As unpleasant as it may be to acknowledge, since the creation of the world (Romans 1:20; Mark 10:6), man has survived on Earth despite all of the *Brontosaurus* belches, *Megalosaurus* methane, and *Diplodocus* dung. Mankind has survived cooling periods (“ice-age(s)”) and warming periods. In truth, man will continue the cycle of life on Earth, until Jesus, Who is “upholding all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3), returns and brings an end to the Earth (2 Peter 3:10-13).

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- Lesson 6: Dinosaurs—Part 2
- Lesson 7: Alleged Human Evolution
- Lesson 8: The Young Earth
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10. Divination (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26,31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Those dabbling in the magical arts—witches, sorcerers, wizards, mediums, charmers, soothsayers, diviners, spiritists, and enchanters—were to be put to death.

Six crimes pertained to sexual matters.

11. Adultery (Leviticus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22). Can you imagine what would happen in our own country if adultery brought the death penalty? Most of Hollywood would be wiped out, as well as a sizeable portion of the rest of our population!

12. Bestiality (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15-16), i.e., having sexual relations with an animal (cf. Bradford, 1856, pp. 384-390).

13. Incest (Leviticus 18:6-17; 20:11-12,14).

14. Homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

15. Premarital sex (Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 22:20-21).

16. Rape of an engaged or married woman (Deuteronomy 22:25-27). Again, imagine what would happen in this country if rape brought the death penalty. Much of the unconscionable treatment of women now taking place would be virtually eliminated.

Capital punishment was the will of the Creator for the Jewish nation—the one civil government on Earth that God Himself established. The death penalty was a viable form of punishment for at least 16 separate offenses. [NOTE: Some people have misunderstood one of the Ten Commandments which says, “You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13). They have assumed that the law forbade taking human life under any circumstances. But this misconception is unwarranted and unsustainable, since God **required** the death penalty for certain crimes. Therefore, the commandment would have been better translated, “You shall not murder.” In other words, the command was a prohibition against an individual taking the law into his own hands and exercising personal vengeance. Biblically **unauthorized** killing or execution of human beings has never been acceptable to God. God wanted the execution of law breakers to be carried out by duly constituted legal authorities.]

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

Moving to the Christian era and the New Testament, which reveals God’s will this side of the cross, the matter of capital punishment is treated virtually the same. The New Testament clearly teaches that capital punishment is God’s will for human civilization. Consider, for example, Romans 13:1-4.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist **will bring judgment on themselves**. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; **for he does not bear the sword in vain**; for he is God’s minister, an avenger **to execute wrath on him who practices evil** (emp. added).

This passage clearly affirms that the state—civil government—has the God-ordained responsibility to keep law and order, and to protect its citizens against evildoers. The word “sword” in this passage refers to capital punishment. God wants duly constituted civil authority to invoke the death penalty upon citizens who commit crimes worthy of death.

For about the last 40 years, Americans have actually witnessed a breakdown on the part of our judicial and law enforcement system. In most cases, the government has failed to “bear the sword.” Instead, the prison system has been overrun with incorrigible criminals. Premature parole and early release programs have become commonplace in order to make room for the burgeoning number of lawbreakers. The apostle Paul, himself, articulated the correct attitude when he stood before Porcius Festus and defended his actions by stating, “If I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, **I do not object to dying**” (Acts 25:11, emp. added). As an inspired apostle, Paul acknowledged that the state divinely possesses the power of life and death in the administration of civil justice.

Likewise, if you or I commit a crime worthy of death, we should not object to dying.

Peter held the same position as that of Paul. He enjoined obedience to the government—an entity that has been sent by God “for the punishment of evildoers” (1 Peter 2:14; cf. Titus 3:1). Jesus implied the propriety of capital punishment when He related the Parable of the Pounds. Those who rebelled against the king were to be brought and executed in his presence (Luke 19:27). Compare that parable with the one Jesus told about the wicked husbandmen in Luke 20:15-16, in which He indicated that the owner of the vineyard would return and “destroy” the vinedressers.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

“Turn the other cheek”?

Those who oppose capital punishment raise a variety of objections to its legitimacy. For example, someone might ask: “Did not Jesus teach that we should turn the other cheek?” Yes, He did, in Matthew 5:39. But in that context, He impressed upon the Jews their need not to engage in **personal vendettas**. The same point is stressed in Romans 12:14-21. Paul said, “Repay no one evil for evil,” and “do not avenge yourselves.” In other words, Christians are not to take the law into their own hands and engage in vengeful retaliation. God insists that vengeance belongs to Him.

Notice, however, that Romans 13 picks right up where Romans 12 leaves off, showing **how** God takes vengeance. He employs civil government as the instrument for imposing the death penalty. So, individual citizens are not to engage in vigilante tactics. God wants the legal authorities to punish criminals, and thereby protect the rest of society.

The Adulterous Woman

A second objection to capital punishment pertains to the woman taken in adultery. “Did not Jesus exonerate her and leave her uncondemned, when the Jews were clamoring for the death penalty in accordance with the Law of Moses?” A careful study of John 8:1-11 yields complete harmony with the principle of capital punishment. At

least four extenuating circumstances necessitated Jesus rejecting the death penalty in this instance.

First, Mosaic regulation stated that a person could be executed **only** if there were two or more witnesses to the crime (Deuteronomy 19:15). One witness was insufficient to invoke the death penalty (Deuteronomy 17:6). The woman was reportedly caught in “the very act” (vs. 4), but nothing is said of the identity of the alleged witnesses. There may have been only one, **thereby making execution illegal**.

Second, even if there were two or more witnesses present to verify the woman’s sin, the Old Testament was equally explicit concerning the fact that **both** the woman **and** the man were to be executed (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). Where was the conspicuously absent **man** on this occasion? Obviously, this was a trumped up situation that did not fit the Mosaic preconditions for invoking capital punishment. **Obedience to the Law of Moses in this instance actually meant letting the woman go.**

Third, consider carefully the precise meaning of the phrase “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first” (John 8:7). If this statement is taken as a blanket prohibition against capital punishment, then this passage flatly contradicts Romans 13. Instead, what Jesus was getting at was what Paul meant when he said, “for you who judge practice the same things” (Romans 2:1). Jesus knew that the woman’s accusers were also guilty of sexual indiscretions or some comparable capital crime—making them unqualified witnesses. He was able to prick them in regard to their guilt by causing them to realize that **He knew** they, too, were guilty. The Old Law made clear that the **witnesses** to the crime were to cast the first stones (Deuteronomy 17:7). Jesus’ remark struck directly at the fact that the woman’s **accusers** were ineligible to fulfill this role (for further discussion on this point, see Miller, 2003).

Fourth, capital punishment would have had to have been levied by a duly constituted court of law. This mob was actually engaging in an illegal

action—vigilantism. Jesus, though the Son of God, would not have interfered in the responsibility of the appropriate judicial authorities to handle the situation, since He, Himself, designed the Jewish legal system. A comparable occasion occurred when one of two brothers approached Jesus out of a crowd and asked Him to settle a probate dispute, to whom Jesus responded: “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:14). So the effort by this mob in John 8 to ensnare Jesus sought to circumvent the due process of the legal system.

Jesus actually handled the situation appropriately, in keeping with legal protocol of both Old Testament law as well as Roman civil law. The woman clearly violated God’s law, and deserved the death penalty. But the necessary prerequisites for pronouncing the execution sentence were lacking—which is precisely what Jesus meant when He said, “Neither do I condemn you.” He meant that since the legal prerequisites that were needed to establish her guilt were not in place, He could not override the law and condemn her. Jesus’ action on this occasion in no way discredits the legitimacy of capital punishment.

“Not a Deterrent”?

A third objection that has been raised in an effort to challenge the propriety of capital punishment is the insistence by some that the death penalty serves no useful purpose, especially when it comes to deterring other criminals from

their course of action. Opponents insist, “capital punishment is **not a deterrent** to crime.” This kind of humanistic, uninformed thinking has held sway for several decades. It might be believable if it were not for the inspired Word of God informing us to the contrary.

Even if capital punishment did not serve as a deterrent, it still would serve at least one other worthwhile purpose: the elimination from society of those elements that persist in destructive behavior. The Bible teaches that some people can be **hardened** into a sinful, wicked condition. They have become so cold, cruel, and mean that even the threat of death does not faze them. Paul referred to those whose consciences had been “seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). Some people are so hardened that they are described as “past feeling” and completely given over to wickedness (Ephesians 4:19). God invoked the death penalty upon an entire generation because their wickedness was “great in the earth” and “every imagination of the thoughts of [their] heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

So the human heart and mind can become so degraded and so alienated from right, good, and truth that a person can be incorrigible and irretrievable. The death penalty spares law-abiding citizens any further perpetration of death and suffering by those who engage in such repetitive actions. How horrible and senseless it is that so many Americans have had to suffer terribly at the hands of

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criminals who already have been found guilty of previous crimes, but who were permitted to go free and repeat their criminal behavior! Even if capital punishment was not a deterrent, it is still a necessary option in society. **It holds in check the growth and spread of hardened criminals.** This fact is reflected in God's repetitious use of the expression "so you shall put away the evil from your midst" (Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 1 Corinthians 5:13).

But in actuality, the Bible clearly teaches that the application of the death penalty is, in fact, a deterrent. This divine insight is seen in God's imposition of the death penalty upon any individual, including one's relative, who attempted secretly to entice others into idolatry. Such a person was to be stoned to death in the presence of the entire nation with this resulting effect: "So all Israel shall **hear and fear**, and **not again do such wickedness as this** among you" (Deuteronomy 13:11, emp. added). Another instance of this rationale is seen in the pronouncement of death upon the incorrigible rebel: "And all the people shall **hear and fear**, and **no longer act presumptuously**" (Deuteronomy 17:13, emp. added). The principle is stated again when the Jews were instructed to take a rebellious and stubborn son and stone him to death—with the effect that "all Israel shall **hear and fear**" (Deuteronomy 21:21, emp. added).

This same perspective is illustrated even in the New Testament. Paul emphasized that elders in the church who sinned were to be rebuked publicly "that others also **may fear**" (1 Timothy 5:20, emp. added; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:14). Ananias and Sapphira, a Christian couple in the early church, were divinely executed in Acts 5, and in the very next verse Luke wrote: "So **great fear** came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things" (Acts 5:11, emp. added). These passages prove that a direct link exists between punishment and execution on the one hand, and the caution and sobriety that it instills in others on the other hand.

The Bible teaches the corollary of this principle as well. Where there is

inadequate, insufficient, and delayed punishment, crime and violence increase. Solomon declared: "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed **speedily**, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11, emp. added). This very phenomenon is occurring even now all across America.

The court system is clogged and backed up to the point that many cases do not come to trial literally for years. Criminals who have been shown to be guilty of multiple murders and other heinous crimes are given light sentences, while those who deserve far less are given exorbitant sentences. A mockery of the justice system has resulted. Such circumstances, according to the Bible, only serve to encourage more lawlessness. The average citizen cannot help but grow lax in his own attitudes. This principle is reflected in the biblical expression, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6).

If the Bible is to be believed, capital punishment is, indeed, a deterrent to criminal behavior. The elimination of hardened criminals is necessary if societies are to survive. The liberal, humanistic values that have held sway in America for the last 40 years are taking their toll, and getting back to God's view of things is the only hope if the nation is to survive the tidal wave of criminal activity.

"Cruel, Unusual, and Vindictive"?

A fourth quibble that someone might raise is that capital punishment appears to be a rather extreme step to take since it is as cruel, barbaric, and violent as the action committed by the criminal himself. Is it not the case that capital punishment is resorting to the same kind of behavior as the criminal? And isn't capital punishment resorting to vindictive retaliation?

The biblical response to this question is seen in the oft'-repeated phrases: "his blood be upon him" (Leviticus 20:9,13,27; Deuteronomy 19:10; Ezekiel 18:13; 33:5) and "his blood be upon his own head" (Joshua 2:19; 2 Samuel 1:16; Ezekiel 33:4; Acts 18:6). Those who carry out the death sentence are,

in reality, neutral third parties. They are merely carrying out the will of God in dispensing justice. The criminal is simply receiving what he brought upon himself—his "just desserts." The expression "his blood be upon him" indicates that God assigns responsibility for the execution to the one being executed. It's like we tell small children: "If you put your hand in the fire, you're going to get burned." There are consequences to our actions. If we do not want to be executed, we should not commit any act that merits death. If we do commit such an act, we have earned the death penalty, and we deserve to get what we have earned. The duly constituted judges, juries, and other legal authorities who mete out the punishment are not to be blamed or considered responsible for the execution of the guilty.

Rather than oppose those who promote capital punishment, painting **them** as insensitive ogres or uncaring, calloused, uncivilized barbarians, effort would be better spent focusing upon the barbaric behavior of the criminals who rape, plunder, and pillage. It is **their** behavior that should be kept in mind. Tears of compassion ought to center on the innocent victims and their families. Lethal injection of a wicked evildoer hardly matches the violent, inhuman suffering and death experienced by the innocent victims of crime. The survivors continue to suffer, while the perpetrator carries on for many years, many trials, and many appeals before justice is served—if ever. The God of the Bible is incensed and outraged at such circumstances. The time has come to start listening to Him as He speaks through His inspired Word.

In contrast to the flawed reasoning of the Supreme Court majority decision noted at the beginning of this article, follow God's logic:

1. If kidnapping (whether of an adult or a child) was a **capital crime**—before and without inflicting any harm on the child ("He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death" [Exodus 21:16; cf. Deuteronomy 24:7; 1 Timothy 1:10]);



San Quentin lethal injection execution chamber

2. If the rape of an engaged or married woman was also a **capital crime** (Deuteronomy 22:25-27);
3. If sexual relations with a daughter was a **capital crime** (Leviticus 18:17; 20:12; cf. Ezekiel 22:11);
4. Then imagine how God feels about the person who would subject a precious, innocent, little girl to the indescribable agony of savage, sexual assault—and the judges who would reject the death penalty! Surely, in the words of Jesus regarding offending children, “it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

With all the kindness and compassion we can muster, the truth is that the rapist who would commit such abominable, loathsome behavior is depraved and should be eliminated permanently from society; and those placed in solemn positions of judicial authority who, in essence, exonerate such a man by withholding the death penalty are equally depraved and warped in their moral sensibilities.

God clearly considers some individuals to have forfeited their right to live in civil society. Their actions are of such gravity that they have earned death for themselves (cf. “his blood be upon him”—Leviticus 20:9,13,27), and the rest of society deserves to be free of the inherent threat they pose to others.

Those who reject this biblical assessment themselves possess degraded moral sensitivities and distorted spiritual faculties. In view of these observations and realizations, one cannot help but be horrified, sickened, and shocked beyond belief at the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Kennedy v. Louisiana* (“U.S. Supreme Court Strikes...,” 2008). The decision by those five justices is despicable and unconscionable. They ought to be ashamed. They most certainly will be in eternity when they are called before the supreme Judge of the world to account for their reckless, ruthless decision.

CONCLUSION

When our own governmental and judicial officials brush aside the moral principles authored by God; when they have allowed their moral sensitivities to be undermined and reshaped by secularism, anti-Christian ideology, and world opinion; when they no longer seek to emulate the mind of God and organize their thinking in harmony with His views; when they fail to “abhor what is evil” (Romans 12:9)—the erosion of civil society is well underway and our nation is doomed to destruction. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

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NOTE FROM

The Editor



Explorer Series #5

In 2002, Apologetics Press launched the *Explorer Series*—a Bible class curriculum that teachers can use to teach third through sixth graders Christian evidences and other Bible-related subjects. Since that time, A.P. has released four volumes of the *Explorer Series*, each containing 13 lessons, which take curious young minds on fascinating journeys through God's Word and God's world. We recently received the following e-mail concerning this series:

I am so impressed with your *Explorer Series* for our middle age kids. I have not seen anything like it in our brotherhood, thus far! I have a college teaching degree, a Master's degree in Instructional Leadership, and currently teach a Wednesday night girls' class for grades 4-9 in Tennessee. They have really enjoyed each of the lessons! Thank you for writing this material specifically for this age group. We can't lose this age group, and I feel like many are slipping. Are there plans to write any more in this *Explorer Series*?

The answer is, "yes!" In fact, we are pleased to announce the release of *Explorer Series #5*: "Creation vs. Evolution." Beginning with lesson one, eager children can explore essential facts that will ground them in concepts oftentimes overlooked in regular Bible class settings. They will learn about the Law of Biogenesis which refutes evolution. They will examine the evolutionary hoaxes and dating methods that have been used to simulate support for evolution. They will be exposed to the evidence that dinosaurs and humans lived on the Earth at the same time. They will consider the Bible view of alleged "global warming" and see the flaws of atheism. They will observe the truth that design demands a Designer.

Each 8-page lesson is presented in the same format as *Discovery*, our wildly popular magazine on Scripture and science for children. Every issue is printed in full color on enameled paper in an 8½ x 11-inch format, and includes professional artwork and illustrations, as well as activities such as puzzles, word-finds, fill-in-the-blanks, true/false questions, and mazes—all of which are designed to reinforce the teaching found within each lesson.

The series is designed so Bible school teachers have the flexibility to send individual lessons home with each child, or compile all 13 lessons into a notebook that can be used in class and then given to the child for future reference at the end of the quarter. Sets containing all 13 lessons are shrink-wrapped for the teacher's convenience. We strongly recommend this new series for use in Christian schools, VBS classes, home-schooling, and summer camps. In keeping with our mandate to keep all of our materials as affordable as possible, cost for the entire series of 13 lessons is only \$10/set. Why not order a set today for each youngster in your third-through-sixth-grade Bible class program, vacation Bible school, or summer camp enrollment? Call us toll free at (800) 234-8558 for credit card orders or orders to be charged to churches.

Dave Miller

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